



NEWS RELEASE

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Crofters have been cheated, says Federation

The Scottish Crofting Federation (SCF) has expressed deep disappointment at the Scottish Government decision to not introduce the planned Areas of Natural Constraint support scheme, instead opting to reduce support payments to the fragile areas.

“The government have reneged on their promise,” said Russell Smith, chair of the SCF, “which was made in the lead up to this phase of the Common Agriculture Policy. For years government and stakeholders have been working on the Areas of Natural Constraint (ANC) support scheme, which was to replace the Less Favoured Areas Support Scheme (LFASS).”

Mr Smith explained, “LFASS has been consistently misused by Scotland to divert public money intended for support to the fragile areas to act as a ‘top-up’ for the industry farms on better land. Crofters have had to put up with being thrown the scraps for decades, but the European directive that LFASS has to stop by the end of this year looked like the light at the end of the tunnel for marginal areas. LFASS was to be replaced with the ANC scheme which would be much more favourable for those constrained areas that actually need the support.

“ANC could have replaced LFASS years ago but agricultural industry lobbyists convinced Scottish Government to keep the change until the last minute. Now Scottish Government have decided to take the penalty option instead; if LFASS is not replaced with ANC it has to be reduced by 20%, and then every year reduced further. So, instead of an expected increase in payment, crofters are faced with the certainty of a 20% cut in support. This seems to be the worst of all options for crofters.”

Mr Smith continued, “With Brexit or independence on the cards we are moving into a new era of Scottish agricultural policy. Introducing ANC now, even at this late stage, would have shown a commitment by Scottish Government to supporting the peripheral areas in the uncertain times to come. Instead the Scottish Government have chosen to cut the income of crofting families in some of the most remote and fragile rural communities in Scotland. The Scottish Crofting Federation now expect the Minister to lay out plans showing how he intends to use the 20% surplus to directly support the crofting communities which he has chosen to penalise.”

END

Contact:

Russell Smith, SCF chair	01863 766 144 / 07899 896 001
Brendan O’Hanrahan, SCF director, agricultural policy	01854 678255 / 07766 462844
Patrick Krause, SCF chief executive	07739 941 199
SCF Office	01599 530 005

Notes to editors

- Pictures can be found at: <http://www.crofting.org>